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The University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Undergraduate Council
Minutes of Meeting
November 12, 2013
3:40pm – University Center Ballroom

MEMBERS PRESENT: Katherine Ambroziak, Greg Baker, Richard Bennett, Kirsten Benson, Kevin Brown, Jacob Clark, George Drinnon, David Dupper, Jean Gauger, Jim Hall, Rob Hardin, R.J. Hinde, Lauren Leath, Jon Levin (Chair), Catherine Luther, Norman Magden, Taylor Odle, David Palmer, Missy Parker, Randal Pierce, Lois Presser, Gary Ramsey, Amber Roessner, Harold Roth, Richard Strange, Eric Sundstrom, Matthew Theriot (Past Chair), Dixie Thompson, Teresa Walker

OTHER ATTENDEES: Mary Albrecht, Monique Anderson, Ruth Darling, Bill Dunne, Kelly Ellenburg, Betsy Gullet, Brent Lamons, Amanda Luallen, Sally McMillan, Cheryl Norris, Taimi Olsen, Dulcie Peccolo, Joe Scogin

The meeting was called to order at 3:40pm by Jon Levin, Chair.

Matthew Theriot presented on the SACS Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) and solicited feedback from members (see pages U2428-U2446). He asked everyone to complete an upcoming survey about the five potential QEP projects and requested that they encourage their colleagues to participate as well. THE QEP team will also conduct open forums in the coming weeks.

Sally McMillan discussed reports from the Student Forum on Learning, the Student Learning Outcomes Taskforce, and the Curriculum Procedures Taskforce (see pages U2449-U2492). The focus of the Student Learning Outcomes Taskforce report was assessment and the need to do more of it to ensure students are getting the educational experience they deserve. The Curriculum Procedures Taskforce report included recommendations such as providing a special designation for courses that carry fees (similar to how general education courses are identified), defining the credit hour (completed last year), and adopting a consent agenda for minor curricular changes to allow for more substantive discussion of larger curricular revisions. Related to the discussion, Taimi Olsen distributed a memo on behalf of the SACS writing team on student learning assessment (see pages U2447-U2448) requesting a procedural change in how curricular proposals are submitted. The proposal would require all (1) new/revised course proposals to include a list of student learning outcomes and (2) program changes to be supported in some way by assessment results. Members will seek feedback from their colleagues, and further discussion will take place at the Curriculum Committee meeting in March.

The meeting adjourned at 5:10pm.

THE QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN (QEP)

MATTHEW THERIOT, QEP CHAIR

MARY ALBRECHT, ASSOCIATE VICE PROVOST FOR
ACCREDITATION

WHAT IS THE QEP?

Summary taken from *Handbook for Institutions Seeking Reaffirmation*

The QEP describes:

- a carefully designed course of action that
- addresses a well-defined and focused topic or issue
- related to enhancing student learning and/or the environment for supporting student learning on an institutional level.

The QEP should be embedded within the institution's ongoing integrated institution-wide planning and is focused primarily on undergraduate students.

WHY A QEP?

- **“Transformational” project for the campus**
- **Most “forward-looking” part of the SACS reaffirmation experience**
- **Campus-wide involvement**

QEP TEAM

The QEP team is a select group representing those individuals from across campus who:

- have the greatest knowledge about and interest in the ideas, content, processes, and methodologies to be developed
- along with expertise in planning and assessment and in managing and allocating institutional resources

**The team is divided into four sub-teams:
Research, Resources, Assessment, and Writing**

QEP TEAM MEMBERS

ASSESSMENT TEAM

Gary Skolits, Chair

Stan Guffy

Dottie Habel

Sandy Mixer

Susan Riechert

Michael McFall

RESOURCE TEAM

Annette Ranft, Chair

Betsy Adams

Bill Dunne

John Haas

Shawna Hembree

Jon Levin

QEP TEAM MEMBERS

RESEARCH TEAM

Sherry Cable, Chair

Chuck Collins

Elizabeth Burman

Bill Park

Dulcie Peccolo

Anton Reece

Teresa Walker

Brent Lamons

WRITING TEAM

**Michael Palenchar,
Chair**

Amy Blakely

Kelly Ellenburg

John Koontz

Lisa Yamagata-Lynch

Tricia Stuth

NEXT STEPS

- I. Solicit feedback from faculty, staff, and students (QEP team)**
- II. Evaluate feedback**
- III. Select a QEP topic (QEP team)**
- IV. Research topic to identify best practices and model programs (Research sub-team)**
- V. Establish clear plan of action with specific goals and objectives (QEP team/Resource sub-team)**
- VI. Develop a clear assessment plan (Assessment sub-team)**
- VII. Write SACS QEP document (Writing sub-team)**

SELECTING A QEP TOPIC

The QEP topic should:

- Be selected through an institutional process
 - Representative QEP team
 - Online surveys of faculty, staff, and students
 - Four open forums with faculty and staff
 - Four open forums with undergraduate students
 - Meeting with UG Council
- Be supported by data
- Be focused on learning or the environment supporting student learning
- Have clear goals, objectives, and assessment plan.

FIVE QEP TOPIC AREAS **

- **Transforming Student Learning through Enhancing Classroom Experiences**
- **Lifelong Learning Skills for Decision Making, Problem Solving, Communicating, and Engaging in Research**
- **Sophomore Success for Retention (or “Stop the Sophomore Slump”)**
- **Problem Solving from Multidisciplinary Perspectives**
- **Community-Based Experiential Learning across the Curriculum**

** In no particular order

TRANSFORMING STUDENT LEARNING THROUGH ENHANCING CLASSROOM EXPERIENCES

Focus: By investing in classroom spaces and technological infrastructure along with training, expertise, and support for instructional faculty, more engaging learning environments can be created at UT. As a result, student learning outcomes will improve, leading to greater retention and graduation rates.

TRANSFORMING STUDENT LEARNING THROUGH ENHANCING CLASSROOM EXPERIENCES

Potential Actions:

- Continue classroom renovation to create environments for engaged student learning.
- Integrate TLC and OIT services to support new pedagogical uses of technology.
- Enable classrooms to support hybrid-learning strategies.
- Enhance the Tennessee Teaching and Learning Center (TLC) to include specialists with disciplinary expertise who can relate instructional methods to disciplinary content and student learning outcomes.
- Increase the number of recognitions for teaching excellence and innovation to be comparable to those offered for achievements in research.

LIFELONG LEARNING SKILLS FOR DECISION MAKING, PROBLEM SOLVING, COMMUNICATING, AND ENGAGING IN RESEARCH

Focus: By leveraging academic literacy expertise on campus, a framework is provided for students to acquire lifelong learning skills, including information literacy, research skills, media and technology competencies, and the ability to critically analyze and communicate information effectively through presentations and writing.

LIFELONG LEARNING SKILLS FOR DECISION MAKING, PROBLEM SOLVING, COMMUNICATING, AND ENGAGING IN RESEARCH

Potential Actions:

- Initiate a partnership between library faculty and staff, OIT, the Writing Center, the TN Teaching and Learning Center, and other academic support units on campus to create a series of interactive online modules to meet the developmental needs of all students from incoming first-year students to graduating seniors.
- Create courses or modules for first- and second-year students, at-risk students, parents and support networks, families of first-generation college students, and soon-to-be-graduating seniors
- Allow individual faculty members and departments to request discipline- or topic-specific modules that can be integrated into the curriculum or required for students in that major.
- Establish a co-curricular transcript.

SOPHOMORE SUCCESS FOR RETENTION (OR "STOP THE SOPHOMORE SLUMP")

Focus: A focus on the sophomore-year experience will aid students' transitions to their futures by illuminating career options, engaging students in experiential learning, providing opportunities such as internships, and helping students develop community citizenship and leadership skills.

SOPHOMORE SUCCESS FOR RETENTION (OR “STOP THE SOPHOMORE SLUMP”)

Potential Actions:

- Establish a second-year common course that addresses the unique issues sophomores face and incorporates a research, experiential, or engagement activity as a requirement.
- Expand Career Services’ boot camp to provide opportunities for sophomores to engage in career-planning activities.
- Strengthen connections across campus among programs that target Sophomore retention and success.
- Expand the Student Success Center’s SophoMORE Fest.
- Provide certificate for completion at year’s end for a “ritual moment.”

PROBLEM SOLVING FROM MULTIDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES

Focus: Students will enhance their problem-solving skills by engaging in research-focused learning through interdisciplinary seminars co-taught by instructors from different disciplines. These seminars—focusing on research questions or problems that are transdisciplinary—would expose students to diverse problem-solving perspectives, encourage multidisciplinary understanding, and promote team teaching among instructors at UTK.

PROBLEM SOLVING FROM MULTIDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES

Potential Actions:

- Create cross-disciplinary seminars for first- or second-year students focused on common research questions or problems.
- Devise seminars that would be co-taught by instructors from diverse disciplines.
- Allow instructors to propose topics or come up with annual or semester-long themes that feature seminars and other events related to that theme (like the “Life of the Mind” book each year).
- Plan seminars that focus on teaching research and problem-solving methods from different disciplinary perspectives.
- Expand and enhance the connections between undergraduate research programs on campus.

COMMUNITY-BASED EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Focus: Development of a service-learning program that uses courses, undergraduate research projects, academic internships, and other modes of experiential learning by which the University and community partners will engage in real-world problem solving aimed at enhancing the economic viability, environmental sustainability, and social integrity of communities throughout Tennessee. Modeled after Oregon's "Sustainable Cities Initiative", the program will partner members of the university community with public, nonprofit, or local businesses across Tennessee to address societal needs.

COMMUNITY-BASED EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Potential Actions:

- Enhance the Office of Service-Learning with the necessary resources to build, coordinate, sustain, and supervise the SCI.
- Encourage Tennessee government officials, community leaders, and agency directors to propose projects related to their real-world problems. SCI staff would coordinate connections between these citizens and the faculty, staff, and students, who would use service-learning, research, or internship-based courses and projects to address the problems.
- Develop partnerships between SCI and campus units such as the Office of Undergraduate Research, Career Services, living and learning communities, honors programs, the Center for Leadership and Service, and First-Year Studies to infuse experiential learning across the students' four-year curriculum.
- Develop links between SCI and student organizations.
- Create partnerships between SCI and the Tennessee Teaching and Learning Center to offer workshops, summer institutes, and faculty fellow programs to assist faculty creation of effective SCI courses and projects.

MEMO

TO: VICE PROVOST. SALLY MCMILLAN
FROM: SACS WRITING COMMITTEE (3.3.1.1: ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING)
SUBJECT: CHANGES IN POLICY/PROCEDURES FOR SACS ACCREDITATION
DATE: 11/13/2013
CC: UNDERGRADUATE COUNCIL

To Vice Provost Sally McMillan regarding the Undergraduate Council, Special Called Meeting

SACS requires policies and procedures of the university to be updated and appropriate for each part of the compliance report. Part of the compliance procedure includes instructions that all policies for the university be checked (and corrected or added to, if need be). For comprehensive standard 3.3.1.1, the outcome on assessment of student learning, SACS states that the “institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in the following area: educational programs, to include student learning outcomes.”

How does our institutional policies and procedures encourage us to “identify expected outcomes”? A commonly adopted method is to state outcomes on course syllabi, as well as state outcomes on descriptions of programs (i.e. on a program’s website). While revising all syllabi at the university is a positive goal, many other campuses (for example, the University of Georgia)—facing this requirement-- have made the following change:

- Require all new / revised course proposals to include statements of the learning outcomes as part of the submission process.
- Require that programmatic changes be supported by evidence from annual assessments

Proposal:

For UT Knoxville, the Undergraduate Council has a published manual for new / revised courses. This committee proposes that the manual’s narrative statement should include 1) a list of the student learning outcomes (SLOs) for the course and 2) discussion of evidence from programmatic assessment that supports substantive changes. The documentation need not be extensive but can be summarized and may address groups of changes with a program.

Discussion:

The first item will be an addition to the narrative that simply gives the committee information about the course and creates a context for discussion during the approval process. As part of the narrative, the SLOs will not be part of the official catalogue record, so the sponsoring department is free to make revisions as necessary to fit programmatic and course goals that are aligned with the course description.

The second item may need to be phased in, as programs gain greater familiarity with annual assessment and can tie each course to programmatic learning goals. At this point, there are courses that tie in directly, but not all courses have undergone examination in this manner.

Both changes are intended to strengthen the understanding and use of SLOs and programmatic learning outcomes in this context, thereby increasing and strengthening the culture of assessment at UTK, and that UTK is “closing the loop” in terms of using annual assessment to drive decisions about curriculum.

It is hoped that these proposals can be ‘folded’ into other changes suggested by the administration, in terms of programmatic assessment.

Additional information on accreditation and assessment is available at <http://sacs.utk.edu/>.

SACS 3.3.1.1 writing committee members:

Denise Gardner, Director, OIRA

R.J. Hinde, Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

Taimi Olsen, Assoc. Director, TennTLC

John Koontz, Faculty, Biochemistry /Cell & Molecular Biology

Student Ownership, and The College Experience

A White Paper by the
Student Forum on Learning
University of Tennessee, Knoxville

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*With gratitude to the*  
Tennessee Teaching and Learning Center &  
University of Tennessee Learning Consortium

**Preface**

The Student Forum on Learning (SFL) is a group of undergraduates dedicated to positively impacting the culture of teaching and learning on UT's campus. We aim to offer feedback on experiences, motivations, expectations, cultural implications, and challenges related to student learning and the college experience. The SFL is sponsored by the Tennessee Teaching and Learning Center (Tenn TLC), and we work closely with their faculty and staff, as well as with the members of the University of Tennessee Learning Consortium (UTLC). Together we aim to identify challenges related to student learning and development, provide a student perspective, and propose creative solutions to be integrated into targeted university initiatives. The group was initiated Spring of 2011, and is currently in its third semester of operation.

While originally intended to simply offer perspectives on learning relevant to the activities of the Tenn TLC, very early into the group's operation it became apparent that members wanted to take on a more active role in advancing student learning. At the first meeting, members expressed a desire to affect university policy and operation in order to more effectively meet student needs. One student recommended we approach group meetings as inquiry discussions about student needs and experiences and, as appropriate, make a formal recommendation to the University regarding the results of these inquiries. Thus, it is with this goal in mind that we present the results of our past two semesters of discussion.

This paper is designed to assist faculty, staff, and administrators in decision-making processes related to the VOL VISION initiative and others having to do with undergraduate student learning. We have been intentional in identifying and describing student experiences in seven key areas related to our learning and development, so that these experiences can help guide strategies for enhancement. We recognize that many at the University of Tennessee have a vision for what they want students to become. However, we feel this vision is not really made explicit so that students can act upon it. Therefore in the concluding section of the paper, we have tried to provide a template with examples that could help facilitate objective setting and identify associated student actions. This tool is intended to help further the process of employing creative solutions to improve student learning and development.

Finally, we want to thank the Tenn TLC and the UTLC for supporting the authorship of this paper. We recognize the hard work they and all other leaders are putting into making the University an even more meaningful and enriching place for us, and we appreciate the opportunity to be a part of this process. We hope that this document makes you proud, and that it prompts ongoing dialogue between students, staff, faculty, and administrators.

## Introduction

Through our exposure to the Tenn TLC and the UTLC, it has come to our realization that many faculty and administrators are concerned about students not taking ownership over their learning and college experiences<sup>1</sup>. We have heard faculty express disappointment with the widespread lack of engagement many students exhibit, and have witnessed it ourselves both inside and outside of the classroom. Many students appear to expect to be spoon-fed their course material, and appear resistant to hard work or self-sufficiency. However unlike many faculty and administrators, we, as students, understand many of the experiences that contribute to these behaviors. We are similarly concerned about student apathy and feel there are a number of ways the University could help encourage and facilitate students taking responsibility for, and ownership over, their learning and development. This paper informs seven of these areas, describing the student perspective (as represented by the SFL) on each, and offering ideas for enhancements. The areas of focus are as follows: campus advising, service-learning and community engagement, general education, the classroom experience, empowering ownership over learning, diversity and interculturalism, and facilities and physical spaces.

### 1. Campus Advising

Throughout the past two semesters, the SFL discussed academic advising extensively. In these discussions, we recognized that the University had put substantial effort into enhancing the advising process. We are grateful for the improvements that have come out of this effort. We hope that advising remains an institutional priority, and that student appointments continue to become more tailored to each individual's experiences and needs. This includes employing intentional and strategic efforts to help us take advantage of valuable opportunities and stay on track to graduate.

Despite that advising appears to have increased as a University priority, the experiences expressed by our members signaled that the quality of sessions is inconsistent. Some students explained that while they were very happy with advising in their departments, the quality of advising at the campus level was irregular. For example, one student stated, "I had a good experience because my advisor had been in the same major as me and she was able to inform me of experiences she had concerning her classes. My schedule was always well thought out and well guided by my advisor." However, another student relayed an experience in which she, as a political science major and an Asian studies minor, was paired with an engineering graduate. She explained that her advisor had a lot of trouble assisting her and wasn't even aware that her minor existed. A third student expressed having a positive experience with a

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<sup>1</sup> By "college experience", we refer to the collective set of experiences, both curricular and co-curricular, that a student engages in throughout his or her time at the university.

peer advisor through the University Honors program, because this student was able to offer guidance relevant to her program of study. These experiences led us to believe that students had more meaningful experiences when their advisors, whether they were faculty advisors, professional advisors, or peer advisors, were knowledgeable about their programs of study.

Our experiences also reflected inconstancy in the quality of processes related to advising sessions. For instance, students who were able to access major-related information (major requirements, departmental policies, etc.) and schedule appointments online expressed greater satisfaction than those who were not. (When trying to schedule an appointment via phone, one student described waiting on hold for 90 minutes, feeling this was “not a very good way to make an appointment.”) Some suggested that they might benefit from being able to schedule an optional extended session as well. One student who had planned her schedule prior to her meeting was able to spend time going through her DARS report with her advisor. She felt that this was extremely helpful, and suggested that these experiences might be available to others if they knew how to prepare, and had the option of an extended appointment.

Given the enhancements to advising that have already been made, we propose that this impact could be maximized if the best practices discussed above could be employed by the entire advising community. We feel that by establishing consistency of good process, making necessary information available, and creating clear expectations for students, the University could both accommodate those changing majors, and help all students understand and fulfill their roles in the student-advisor partnership. Therefore we propose:

- All advisors be expected to have a strong knowledge base about their students’ programs of study, or that all student-advisor partnerships be coordinated based on major, if applicable.
- All major requirements, departmental policies, and other important information become available to students online.
- All appointment scheduling be moved to a centralized, online system such as Banner or the system used by the business school.
- An optional extended appointment length be offered to students.
- Quality assessment surveys be integrated into the advising processes.
- The University employs an optional peer advising program, available to all students.

## **2. Service-Learning and Community Engagement**

Service-learning and community engagement has been an area of significant focus from the SFL’s initiation, and remains a concern to us. In the first meeting, an SFL member expressed, “A person can come and go from UT and never know what it means to be a good citizen.” We see this as a problem. While some of us have engaged in service experiences through the University, many students have not.

We suspect that is because the opportunities and experiences are not integrated into most student's academic curricula, and there is little encouragement for students to become engaged. If there were more emphasis from the University on the value of service, these experiences would be more heavily integrated into the curriculum, and students would be encouraged to seek them out. Without this emphasis, not only are students missing out on the benefits of serving the community, but the University is missing out on a great opportunity to engage us as learners.

These missed opportunities are deeply concerning to us, as we observe among many students a severe lack of engagement in the learning process and the college experience in general. As one student reflected, "My service learning class had the largest impact of any single class on my education. Being a political science major, I have sat through numerous lectures on just how much public policy influences lives. None of that hit home until I spent a semester studying education policy and working in an inner-city school program. The correlation between what I learned in the classroom and how it applied to the outside world that I experienced in that class has changed the way I approach any classroom subject. The class finally allowed me to learn and not just be educated." Just as this student was enlightened and empowered through her service experience, we want all students to be. Through having a greater awareness of community issues, we want all students to have the ability and desire to apply reason and problem solving skills to community issues. In short, we want, for ourselves and our fellow students, more real-world engagement with our subject matter. Service-learning provides opportunities for all of these things.

While we are aware that there has been a proposal put forth to enhance the University's community engagement and service-learning capacities through the creation of a campus-wide center, we hope that our own advocacy can help advance these efforts. Therefore we suggest the following measures:

- Create a center for service-learning and community engagement on campus, through which students can easily seek opportunities to serve.
- Promote a culture of service and volunteerism across campus by strategically integrating service experiences across the academic curricula.
- Increase institutional priority on civic and community engagement by offering multiple and varied service-learning courses in each academic college.
- Initiate a curriculum requirement (with an opt-out opportunity for select students) of one 1-3 hour service learning course.
- Institute a graduation pledge similar to that used by Appalachian State: "I pledge to explore and take into account the social and environmental consequences, and the civic and community responsibilities, of any job or career I consider and will try to improve these aspects of any organizations for which I work." (<http://act.appstate.edu/graduationpledge>).

### 3. General Education

While recognizing that certain courses in the current curriculum can be critical to our development, the SFL's perceptions about general education held that the rigid structure limits their abilities to explore new areas of learning. As one student expressed, "The current structure seems to help those who are not as self-motivated or proactive about building an enriching and personally relevant course of study, but it seems to greatly impede those who are." We realize that petitioning is occasionally an option for expanding our learning opportunities, but this process can be difficult and problematic, and sometimes requires students to complete the course first. One student described being informed that she would need to complete a course before petitioning. She reflected that "With little flexibility in my 4-year plan, this option was simply not possible for me and I ended up taking a course with which I had little engagement." Another student expressed being limited by a "rigid, major-intensive schedule," in which "being able to substitute courses more easily or having a more clear and streamlined process to do so" would have greatly benefitted her.

The students also expressed that the rigidity of the general education curriculum can inhibit student ownership over the college experience by requiring very little thought or consideration to one's course planning. Some described their course curriculum as being almost entirely prescribed by the majors. For these students and others like them, it is possible, and even likely, to graduate having taken few or no courses out of sheer interest, and having exercised little independence over their academic careers. We feel that this situation can contribute to students feeling complacent about their courses, and not perceiving a need to take responsibility. Since we understand the need to take ownership and responsibility, we want to see both students and the University reap the benefits of this ownership. Therefore, we propose the following measures regarding general education:

- The number of course options available through the general education curriculum be increased.
- Students have the ability to petition for a course replacement before completing the course they wish to petition.
- The course petition process be converted to the web so that students can easily—under the guidance of their advisors—initiate and follow through with course replacements.

### 4. The Classroom Experience

Since our primary focus as an organization is student learning, we devoted a significant amount of our meeting discussions to the student learning experience. Regarding this experience, we perceive—as mentioned above—a general lack of engagement, ownership, and motivation among many students. While this is not characteristic of all students, we have some ideas as to why many act this way. First, much of our class time is spent listening to instructors lecture. While many students do not see this as a

problem, we feel it can inhibit motivation and willingness to work hard. One student expressed that “lectures can provide a good foundation for experiential learning... [but] a hands-on portion makes students more receptive to the lecture.” Another student shared that while her physical presence is often a requirement of the course, she does not often feel as though she must be mentally present for the class. Some SLF members felt that the standard lecture format can also keep students from getting to know others in the class, something they expressed as being important to them. In fact, one student explained that he “would like to see minimum lecturing and more individual and group study.” In line with these statements, we propose that by implementing creative means and ways for students to engage each other and the material, many of them will participate more actively and enthusiastically in class.

Through our conversations, we also noticed that lack of access to instructors could impede our ownership over and progress toward learning. A number of students spoke of experiences in which they went days or weeks without being their instructors returning their emails, and some spoke of their instructors also not being available during office hours. Because we feel that regular access to our instructors helps us develop valuable relationships with them, as well as self-assess our learning and performance, we propose that by maintaining accessibility, instructors can facilitate greater ownership and motivation among their students.

In order to increase overall engagement, ownership, and motivation among students, we advocate that instructors:

- Incorporate more interactive activities into the curriculum (such as experiential learning, clickers, and other methods) that allow students to actively participate in their learning.
- Increase opportunities for peer or small group discussion about course material.
- Attempt to accommodate different modes of learning (such as active or visual learning) by using different methods of instruction over the course of the semester.
- Strive for consistent accessibility, and invite students to ask questions after class, during office hours, or through email.
- Include multiple in-class responses and opportunities for students to gauge their understanding of course material. Ideally, some or all of these would be ungraded.
- Utilize the Blackboard grade posting system for all courses, and that grades be posted in a timeframe that allows students to gauge their performance over the semester.

## **5. Empowering Ownership Over Learning**

As expressed in previous sections, we feel there is a lack of engagement, ownership, and motivation among many students. In addition to the perceived reasons described above, we suspect that many students often do not understand their instructors’ intended outcomes, or the relevance of their course

material. Some students might figure this out over the course of the semester, but our instructors could help us get there faster by making these expectations and outcomes explicit early on. One student described a “lack of communication about expectations,” and another expressed a desire to see a greater “connection between presented material and its purpose or use.” We feel that when instructors clearly delineate their objectives and expectations, students are better able to guide their own learning because they know what outcomes they are striving for. It is also likely that when students receive more non-graded assignments aimed at assessing and promoting their learning, they will in turn demonstrate greater learning throughout the course. In summary, we propose that through more intentional communication of learning outcomes and non-graded assessment of learning, students will take greater ownership and achieve greater learning.

Secondly, a lack of knowledge about the courses they are selecting during the registration process may also indirectly contribute to the lack of ownership many students exhibit over their learning. Often students choose courses they would not have chosen if they had access to better information. One student expressed that he finds it “frustrating to blindly guess about courses,” and stated that he would “like to have the opportunity to make more educated decisions about scheduling.” The opposite scenario can occur as well, with certain courses not appealing to many students because they do not recognize the value of the course from the information available. Therefore, we feel that if students had more complete information about courses during registration, they would be able to make more informed decisions over what courses to take.

Therefore, in order to increase student ownership through intentional course selection and increase engagement, ownership, and motivation throughout courses, we propose the following:

- All course syllabi include intended learning outcomes.
- Instructors discuss these outcomes in depth on the first day of class, and continually tie course material and activities back to these outcomes.
- Courses include regular formative assessment of students’ learning and overall progress.
- That the University compile a database of syllabi for all UT courses, with each syllabi containing at minimum the course learning outcomes, assignments, grading scale, instructor expectations, and teaching methods. (Such a database could include the syllabi from the last time the course was offered, and instructors could replace the syllabi every time the course is updated.)
- The syllabi database be integrated into the Banner system, so that students can view it as they are registering.
- The TN 101 system also be integrated into Banner so students can view evaluative data alongside the course syllabus.



## **6. Diversity and Interculturalism**

During our first meeting of Fall 2011, we had the privilege of having Rita Geier speak with us about diversity issues on campus and in society. Through this meeting, many members came to a better understanding of why appreciation for diversity is a critical component of an academic community. At the heart of our conversation was a desire for diverse student voices to not only be heard, but to be sought out and valued. One student mentioned that, “In order to appreciate your fellow classmate, you need to first learn how to appreciate their unique background.” As a group, we agreed that all students graduating from UT should have an appreciation for differences, and that the University should be a place where we embrace these differences and learn from each other. Another student said, “I don’t feel as though any of my courses, save one specifically on race, addressed diversity or facilitated diversity in the classroom.” We would like to see a campus culture that accepts and values individual differences, one that promotes an inquisitiveness and desire to engage with multiple and varied perspectives and experiences. We feel that a more visible and institutionalized emphasis on appreciation for diversity and interculturalism would create a warmer learning environment for many students, and would contribute to greater student involvement and success. The SFL plans to address this issue ourselves, through a video aimed at helping students understand and appreciate the diverse experiences of their peers. We hope that the University will also work to foster these outcomes by considering the following measures:

- Including a diversity module, similar to the Life of the Mind module, in the orientation process, and making it mandatory for all entering freshmen.
- Including in every academic major multiple “access points” for diversity and interculturalism messages. Examples include integrating training into course curriculum, making it a recurring part of departmental discussions, and including it in the faculty rewards structure.

## **7. Facilities and Physical Spaces**

Last Fall, the SFL served as a focus group for the Classroom Renovation Committee, informing ideas for the Humanities classroom renovations. As we thought about our experiences in various classroom spaces across campus, we realized that the state of the University’s physical spaces affects our perceptions about how we are valued by the University, and in many cases affects our ability to learn. For instance, those of us who have attended classes in the Haslam Business Building or the new Ayers Hall conveyed feelings that these were “more serious learning spaces” than the Humanities and Social Sciences building, or Estabrook Hall.

Some members described incidents in which the physical classroom space actually inhibited their learning. Issues including extreme temperatures, loud construction, and noisy air conditioning units contributed to these classroom disruptions. For example, several students complained of extreme

temperatures in buildings such as Estabrook Hall, in which one student took multiple tests in eighty-degree temperatures. To combat this problem, window air conditioning units were added to cool the classrooms, but the units were unsuccessful and just created more noise and distraction.

Additionally, students repeatedly pointed out the “decrepit” state of some buildings on campus. For instance, as one person described, “During last year’s hailstorms, I was one of the fortunate students who got stuck in Estabrook Hall, working on a design project, when the roof began to break as balls of hail struck it and entered the building.” Students also mentioned many of the classrooms limiting their instructors’ use of teaching methods other than traditional lecture. This, too, was felt to be problematic, because as mentioned above we are able to take greater ownership over our learning when we are involved in the process. In summary, we feel that the declining state of many facilities impedes student engagement and contributes to many students feeling like they are a low priority to the University.

As part of the Classroom Renovation Committee proposal, we also photographed students studying across campus, to inform where students spend time studying. This project prompted us to examine the availability of informal learning spaces. Many students voiced a desire for more of these spaces, where they could engage in individual or group study. These spaces could range from a group of tables and a white board to a sophisticated space such as the Library Commons. Some buildings across campus have such spaces, and we feel they contribute to a more tight-knit and engaged academic community. The Library Commons is a great example of an effective informal learning space, and we hope that more buildings could integrate smaller versions of this type of space. In order to address this and the concern of inadequate learning facilities, we suggest the following measures:

- Classrooms in older buildings be equipped with ceiling fans.
- The University assesses the soundness of older buildings, and makes changes and updates necessary to creating comfortable classrooms.
- Newly built structures and classroom renovations allow for greater flexibility in teaching methods.
- The University integrates informal learning spaces into the renovation plans of all new academic buildings.

## **Conclusion**

As stated in this paper’s preface, we recognize that our leaders have a vision for what they want us to become. As exemplified above, we too have aspirations for our learning and development. We hope the experiences we have shared can help shape and guide the development of this vision. To facilitate this process, we have, with feedback from the Tenn TLC and UTLC, created the following template. This template includes what we believe to be some of the intended outcomes the University wants all students

to achieve, and allows an opportunity for further thinking about how targeted activities across the four-year span can address these. As stated above, we hope that this tool helps facilitate communication of the University's vision for its students by clarifying and connecting overarching outcomes with specific actions. This template is just meant to provide a framework from which to build an operational definition of the vision. The categories provided are just examples.

| <b><i>Example Outcomes:</i></b> | Core Base of Knowledge                                          | Responsible Citizenship                                                                             | Appreciation for Diversity                            | Professional & Personal Development                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Freshman</b>                 | <i>Example:</i> Join a learning community or formal study group | <i>Example:</i> Join a campus organization<br><i>Example:</i> Fulfill plagiarism module requirement | <i>Example:</i> Complete diversity orientation module |                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Sophomore</b>                |                                                                 |                                                                                                     |                                                       | <i>Example:</i> Make contact with Career Services Center<br><i>Example:</i> Consider undergraduate research participation |
| <b>Junior</b>                   |                                                                 | <i>Example:</i> Undertake a major-related service-learning experience                               |                                                       | <i>Example:</i> Consider travel abroad                                                                                    |
| <b>Senior</b>                   |                                                                 |                                                                                                     |                                                       |                                                                                                                           |

By equipping students with the tools we need and by integrating purposeful opportunities to achieve targeted outcomes, the University can empower us to take greater ownership and responsibility over our learning and development. While we recognize that the University has made substantial enhancements dedicated to this end, there are still a number of inhibiting factors. The goal of this white paper was to identify some of these factors and contribute potential solutions through which they might be addressed. Our hope is that through creating conditions that allow and encourage greater ownership over our learning and development, that the university might be a richer, more fulfilling place for all.

# Preparing for the **FUTURE**

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## Assuring Student Learning

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## Executive Summary

UTK needs to create a healthy culture of assessment, one which centers on student learning and which includes a clear system of capturing assessment for decision-making in academic units as well as for reporting assessment results to our constituents. We need to know how our students learn; we need to know what and when they learn; and, we need to know this to make informed curricular revisions. Our decisions and actions will then be grounded in evidence, in what is actually happening in our curriculum.

This report is not a review of the literature on student learning and program assessment as they relate to institutional effectiveness. It is a blueprint of an approach to developing a culture of assessment at UTK based upon the research literature and best practices at other universities and those used by units at UTK.

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## Current environment: challenges in higher education

In an age of growing economic uncertainty, rapid changes in the domestic job markets, and unparalleled competition around the globe, higher education institutions in the United States find themselves at the very center of the most current and pressing national public policy issues:

- States defunding higher education
- Institutional increases in tuition in response to the defunding of higher education
- Federal call for increasing college completion for more Americans
- The call to stimulate graduation from science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) areas

While the expectations for higher education continue to grow in terms of meeting these challenges, there are also increasing demands that higher education demonstrate its own effectiveness and accountability<sup>i</sup>. As the costs of a college education increase each year, many external constituencies are beginning to be more vocal in questioning the value of post-secondary education. Recent Congressional testimony by Mike Rowe of the Discovery Channel on the need for people prepared in the skilled-trades (i.e., plumbers, electricians, HVAC technicians) highlights the disconnect between the national debate on K-16 education and national needs.<sup>ii</sup> Increasingly, public and private investment in higher education by funders, parents, and students will be contingent upon the demonstration of the value of a college degree. The era of accountability in education that was previously focused on public P-12 schools has now fully entered the halls of institutions of higher education.

These ongoing and expanding demands for accountability will not likely abate given the central role higher education plays with regard to the economy, job preparation, economic development, knowledge creation and dissemination addressing technical and social problems, as well as its many other major contributions towards social, cultural, and personal development. Both internal and external constituencies can be expected to continue the demand for evidence that higher education is accountable and that a college degree is of value. Some of the more pressing expectations of the various higher education constituencies can be briefly summarized as follows:

### *Expectations of External Constituencies*

- *US Department of Education.* National policy makers and the US Department of Education (US DOE) expect higher education institutions to demonstrate the value of educational programs given the tremendous federal role and support for student financial aid. Moreover, national policy makers have also expressed growing concern about the ability of institutional accrediting bodies to regulate and formally sanction member institutions who cannot demonstrate the value of the college education they offer.
- *Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and other programmatic accrediting agencies.* Regional and academic program accrediting agencies promulgate standards for accreditation that require evidence that academic programs (and services) are effective in providing students with needed levels of knowledge and skill. These accrediting agencies continue to strengthen the requirements (standards) by which they judge the educational effectiveness of an institution and/or its academic programs, and thus

the demonstrated achievement of specified student learning outcomes within courses and degree programs is central to their concerns. SACS requires documentation that specifically addresses institutional effectiveness.<sup>iii</sup>

- *Tennessee legislature and THEC.* State leaders and funding agencies want assurances that the resources given to public institutions are leading to more graduates and that these graduates have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions suitable for a global market place. They also expect that we be stewards of state resources, being effective and efficient with state funding, student tuition, and utilization of campus facilities.
- *Employers and Chambers of Commerce.* Employers want assurances that graduates have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are consistent with their educational credential. They want graduates to have marketable skills as well as the ability to think critically, communicate well, and work in a team setting. A degree has to signify something of value, and employers expect institutions issuing degrees to be able to demonstrate that a college credential signifies an appropriate level of academic accomplishment. Local Chambers of Commerce are interested in having an educated and skilled workforce to stimulate economic development and lure new businesses and industries to Tennessee communities.
- *The general public.* The general public seeks assurances that tax dollars spent on higher education and family resources spent on tuition costs are appropriate and justified, especially in terms of the final degree product. Various agencies and organizations offer competitive quality rankings to help the public make informed choices and decisions regarding higher education institutions and programs, and these rating systems can be expected to become more specialized and detailed.

#### *Expectations of Internal Constituencies*

- *Students.* Students want to know the comparative value from each higher education course and academic program option available to them.<sup>iv</sup> During their college career, students want to make informed educational decisions about programs of study and course options. They also want their degree credential to be recognized as signifying a level of quality and accomplishment of interest to future employers.
- *Parents.* Parents want to know that their child is receiving a quality education that will be valued, especially by potential employers. They want to be able to contribute to informed choices for their children regarding various higher education options and the available programs and courses offered. They want to see evidence of a worthy return on their increasingly more substantial higher education investment.
- *Faculty.* Faculty want to know that the students they educate and send out as graduates of their program have attained a requisite level of learning. They want to know that their teaching is effective, and they want to know how their teaching and student learning can be improved. Further, they want to ensure that all course options for their academic programs are effectively providing students with the desired program skills and competencies. They also want to be able to demonstrate and share the value of the academic programs they offer to attract talented students.

- *University Administration.* Universities want to know to what extent each program offered is effective in providing students desired levels of knowledge and skill. Administrators also want a viable method for determining and sharing the value of their degree programs, and using this information to attract more talented students as well as more external resources for supporting programs and services. At the University of Tennessee, the establishment and commitment underlying the top 25 initiative as well as the creation of the Teaching and Learning Center are two examples of a long-term institutional commitment to provide evidence of institutional accountability as well as enhance faculty teaching effectiveness and the promotion of student learning.

### What has changed?

While some level of accountability expectations from internal and external constituencies has been active for years, the context in which higher education now operates has changed substantially, and higher education will have to rise to the occasion and effectively respond. The federal government appears to be ready to intervene if regional and program accreditors are not able to ensure academic program quality. National and state policy makers are increasingly expected to justify decisions on how to spend very limited public resources, and as such future investments in higher education will increasingly have to compete with major national priorities and needs such as health, national defense, transportation, etc., as well as national debt repayment.

Accrediting agencies are under notably increasing pressure to prove that the awarding of accreditation is based on solid evidence that institutions are effectively measuring and demonstrating their educational value. Should they be unsuccessful, member institutions can expect to lose their ability to engage in self-regulation, as national policy makers will most likely intervene. Tennessee, similar to all states, also has limited public resources and growing priorities. In some aspects, Tennessee has been a leader in promoting the effectiveness of public higher education institutions, beginning with the renowned performance-funding program. However, state policy makers also appear to be more than ready to set educational expectations and tie them to funding as embodied in the Complete College Tennessee Act of 2010 (HB7008).

In the past, it was possible for higher education institutions to selectively respond to various accountability pressures from internal and external constituencies on a piecemeal basis. However, it may no longer be wise or prudent to respond to accountability demands in the short term only to back off on the commitment until then next accreditation cycle or ad hoc requests from various constituencies. Those days are over. The federal and state involvement in public education through No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) suggests that if higher education does not meet the challenge of defining and demonstrating the value of college degrees, public policy makers at the state and federal level will feel compelled do it for them, and public higher education may forever lose its strong and proud tradition of institutional autonomy and self-governance.

### What is required?

For higher education, there are two critical and inherent challenges in responding to these multiple demands for accountability. First, unlike private sector organizations, there is no single set of basic metrics (e.g., profit/net worth) that quickly demonstrates success or its lack thereof in higher education. Second, institutions of higher education are expected to take the lead on defining and demonstrating their effectiveness. These two challenges are substantial, but not insurmountable. While there are many potential indicators of higher education



accountability and effectiveness, most calls for accountability have a central focus on student learning. At this time, the key challenge for educational institutions appears to be the need to demonstrate for each course and program (and institution) that student-learning outcomes are defined, assessed, and that assessment results are used to improve the educational process. Each constituency presenting demands for greater accountability would find this focus (i.e., the value of a degree in terms of student outcomes) to be responsive to their accountability concerns.

Fortunately, the elements of a process for ensuring and documenting student learning accountability are not mysterious, overly complex, or particularly innovative.<sup>v</sup> Every public P-12 school in the country has been under a mandate to measure and report on student academic outcomes under NCLB. For higher education, accrediting agencies and scholars have long suggested the criteria for accountability related to student learning, and these can be summarized as follows:

1. Student learning objectives and outcomes (SLOs) must be explicitly and effectively stated for each course and degree program.
2. Teaching and other learning experiences must ensure opportunities for students to be made aware of expected learning outcomes and to achieve them.
3. Learning assessments must be in place that aligns with stated student learning objectives, and these assessments must provide an accurate measure of the extent to which intended student outcomes have been achieved.
4. Assessment results need to be used responsively to gauge and further enhance the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process.
5. A process is needed for summarizing course, program, and institutional student learning outcomes processes (learning objectives, student achievement of the outcomes, and faculty use of assessment for improvements in the teaching and learning process). Moreover, a process needs to be in place for disseminating a summary of these results to intended internal and external constituencies.

Processes for consolidating and disseminating results at the institutional level will certainly require substantial, if not unprecedented, effort and collaboration among faculty, academic leaders, and administrators.

Many academic programs, especially those programs that are separately accredited by academic program accrediting agencies, have been required to develop and implement a process for student learning accountability. Other programs have aspects of these processes in place, but they may need to make enhancements to strengthen the process:

1. Expected course and program student learning outcomes need to be formally stated, stated in a measurable manner, and/or be available for students' review and consideration for course selection.
2. Learning opportunities need to be explicitly or tightly aligned with stated SLOs.
3. SLOs assessments need to adequately cover or effectively align with all student-learning objectives.
4. SLOs need to be used to support teaching and learning improvement.
5. SLOs results need to be formally consolidated, documented, and/or disseminated.
6. The SLOs process needs consistency across courses and academic programs allowing for effective summarization and dissemination of SLO progress across the university.

Higher education accountability in its current form is one challenge that cannot be avoided, endlessly debated, or shirked off until the next round of renewed external pressure. Higher education institutions who fail to address the accountability needs of internal and external constituencies can expect to lose their long-held and valued autonomy. Simply stated, institutions must discipline themselves now or someone else will in the very near future.

The time for action is now; failure to act is not an option for the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. We need to create a culture of assessment with a commitment to measuring and demonstrating the achievement and use of SLOs as an ongoing, standard institutional practice.

## Overview of Proposed Project

The ideal culture of assessment is considered to be that

1. Every course/class has a set of e-searchable, achievable student learning outcomes (SLOs) that are linked to the SLOs of the academic program and relate to SLOs of other courses in the program.
2. SLOs are assessed in course and out of course.
3. The assessments are tied back to the course, instructor and unit with accountability for improvement

To get to this fully integrated assessment model, we need buy-in from each academic program to go through the process of

1. revisiting their SLOs established during preparation of the SACS 5th year interim report
2. ensuring that courses address SLOs by creating the program's curriculum map
3. implementing a systematic plan of assessing SLOs (connecting SLOs to specific student assessments)
4. making curricular changes based on the assessment findings

Concurrent with this, as an institution,

1. charge the Undergraduate and Graduate Curriculum Committees to examine the curricular revision process to ensure that approved changes are based on assessment findings (i.e., Rationale statements include data derived from assessment)
2. work with IT to identify appropriate technology to use for
  - a. assessment plans approvals and findings review
  - b. public-facing, searchable database of course syllabi (which contain the SLOs for the course) linked to the instructor (i.e. Is there a Banner module or add-on or some other system that can pull data from Banner?)
3. work with the Tennessee Teaching and Learning Center (TN TLC) to create guidelines for forming measureable SLOs
4. once each course and every program has SLOs that build the educational experience for the students, develop a system that utilizes assessment plan findings in unit strategic planning, academic and program review, and rewards system of the university (i.e., rewards for faculty and the units) by incorporating appropriate language into policies and procedures

The long-term goal is to improve the learning process by developing a continual process of change built upon sound assessment (Figure 1), the accepted norm endorsed by the regional and programmatic accrediting organizations and the US DOE.

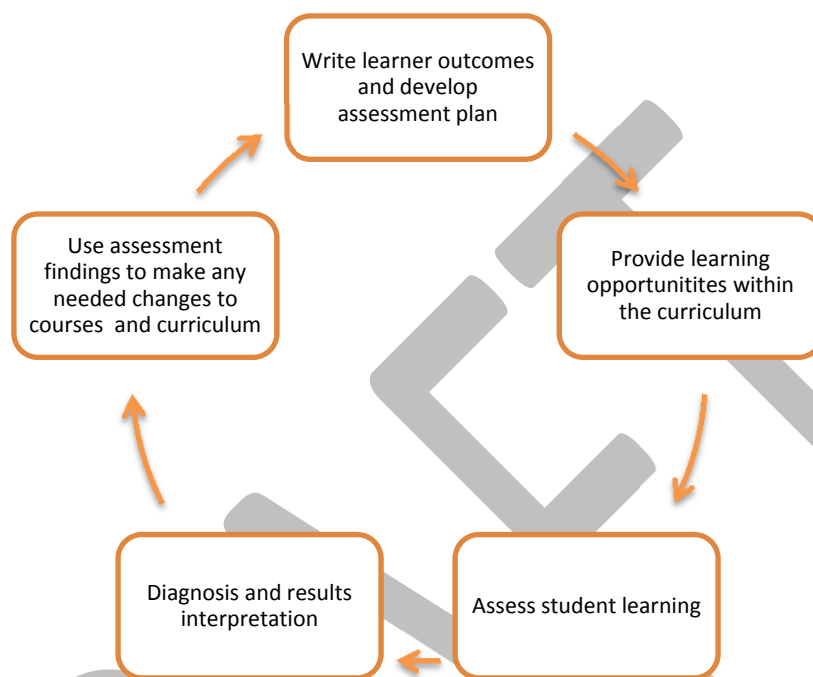


Figure 1 The cycle of assessment used to ensure student learning

## Project Activities and Timeline

The timeline will be dictated by the next round of SACS accreditation. The mid-cycle report for UT was submitted March 21, 2011. We recommend that work progress at a rate to meet the next submission to SACS. **The task is to implement a more formalized learning outcomes assessment process that is in place for at least the two academic years prior to the next reaffirmation documentation to SACS. This would allow the outcomes from the first year to be used to inform changes to programs leading to improvements the second year. These results demonstrate a more formalized university process in making steps toward best practices in achieving optimal student learning.**

Efforts to implement use of learning outcomes or how to encourage use:

- Submission to curriculum committee of the learning outcomes with revised/new courses and with assessment data supporting the requested changes to courses and curricula
- Development of syllabi standards with the inclusion of SLOs in syllabi for all courses
- Linked syllabi to timetable entries for courses
- Through peer evaluation of teaching, assess how well learning outcomes are made apparent in the course itself and the use of SLOs in the assessments of courses and programs

- With SAIS and other forms of classroom evaluation, including asking students about whether the learning outcomes were met
- In the various reviews conducted on campus of personnel and programs
  - Faculty reviews: retention review of tenure-track faculty and non-tenure track faculty (lecturers and clinical faculty), promotion and tenure review process and annual review process of tenured and tenure-track faculty
  - GTAs reviews
  - Department heads and deans (i.e., heads need to hold faculty accountable and deans need to hold heads accountable)
  - Academic program and unit reviews

By making the effective use of SLOs and the assessment process part of faculty and academic program review processes, faculty and academic units will be held accountable for building a culture of assessment.

Implementation should include:

- Top down directives with adoption as essential - buy-in by Chancellor and Provost
- Bottom up from tenure, tenure-track, and non-tenure-track faculty and other instructional staff; need to seek out early adopters and begin to change the culture
- Provide funding for faculty development to kick-start the process
  - Training in writing SLOs
  - Training in creating assessments to evaluate SLOs
  - Training in how to use the assessment results to make appropriate changes that result in the desired changes in learning
  - Training on how to include in faculty (tenure, tenure-track, and non-tenure track faculty) annual reviews and academic program reviews
- Adoption of above suggested changes to the curriculum process by the Undergraduate and Graduate Councils' procedures for course and curriculum changes.
- Adoption of new language in Faculty Handbook and the Manual for Faculty Evaluation, where appropriate, to build in the use of SLOs, academic assessment, and accountability into the various review processes.
- Provide incentives during a phase-in period such as
  - waiving the 30/70 room (use of 8 am courses),
  - departmental bonuses for early implementation
- Provide summer salary stipends (for 12-month faculty, extra-service pay) for faculty serving on college-level or university-level assessment review teams that provide constructive feedback to departments on how to improve their processes (review teams are not intended to be overseers who approve or reject assessment plans and application of results)

## Timeline:

A timeline is proposed, however, there are more details to be fleshed out such as process to identify faculty to participate on committees.

| Deadline    | Activity                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Responsible Unit/Person                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| May 2012    | A year of training and revision of policies and procedures: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify Early Adopters</li> <li>2. Training faculty on how to write SLOs and how to assess</li> <li>3. Undergraduate and Graduate Councils: revise curricular submission guidelines documents</li> <li>4. Faculty Affairs of Faculty Senate: annual review, promotion and tenure documentation</li> <li>5. Office of the Provost: Academic Program Review documentation</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. All</li> <li>2. TN TLC: Schumann</li> <li>3. Undergraduate Council and Office of the Provost/ McMillan; Graduate Council and Graduate School/ Hodges</li> <li>4. Faculty Senate Leadership and Office of the Provost/Gardial</li> <li>5. Office of the Provost/ McMillan</li> </ol> |
| August 2013 | SLOs should be written, incorporated into course syllabi with assessment plans in place                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Office of the Provost: McMillan and Graduate School/ Hodges<br>TN TLC: Schumann                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| May 2014    | First assessments due to each college's Office of the Dean                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Department heads                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| August 2014 | Establish college-level and/or university-level, faculty-led committees to review assessment plans and use of results; train members to be able to do the work for the first time during summer 2014                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Office of the Provost: McMillan and Graduate School/ Hodges<br>TN TLC: Schumann                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| August 2015 | Website with links to a searchable database of syllabi—syllabus repository / searchable catalog / even possible "pull down" of potential learning outcomes, educational objectives, department objectives, instructor objectives                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Office of the Provost with OIT<br>OIT will need to be a partner in either a home-grown database system or evaluating commercial assessment products that can interface with the current academic catalog management system (ACALOG) on-line catalog and, possibly, Banner                                                     |
| August 2015 | Assessment results database, for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• THEC and SACS reporting needs;</li> <li>• linking to unit responsibility; the information should be used to inform course changes,</li> <li>• creating reports by the unit for program and faculty reviews;</li> <li>• availability for academic advisors in guiding students to understand the curriculum and rationales for taking courses</li> </ul>                                                         | Office of the Provost with OIT<br>OIT will need to be a partner in either a home-grown database system or evaluating commercial assessment products that can interface with the current academic catalog management system (ACALOG) on-line catalog and, possibly, Banner                                                     |

## Outcomes

### Measurable Project Outcomes:

1. Every course/class has a set of e-searchable, achievable SLOs that are linked to the SLOs of the academic program and relate to SLOs of other courses in the program.
2. SLOs are well written according to common practice in higher education, and to disciplinary practices specifically.
3. SLOs are assessed in course and out of course (i.e., major field test, licensure exams, portfolio review).
4. The assessment results are tied back to the course, instructor and unit with accountability for improvement action plans.
5. End-of-course assessment is tied explicitly to the SLOs.

### Operational Outcomes:

1. Increased student satisfaction in terms of empowerment in choosing courses, ability to make better choice decisions, and clearer timelines to graduation through choices of majors through access to syllabi and outcomes.
2. Timeliness in SACS and other accreditation reports creation and compliance.
3. Improved better program evaluation in university departments.

### Outcomes Defined in Terms of the Impact on the Various Constituencies

#### For the external components:

*For the US DOE, accrediting agencies and the state government*

We would have documentation showing what we are delivering and the process we are using to access and update the way we deliver it. We will be able to easily report on our actions and to respond to new demands and opportunities.

*For the state government, employers of our students, and the general public*

We could provide detailed and assessed sets of desired student attributes from the university level on down to the individual student. We will be able to match our outcomes with longer term success of our students.

#### For the internal components:

*For students*

We would provide more clarity of the value of their degree and degree components to larger scale outcomes. Students will be able to make more appropriate decisions as they complete their education and they will be able to express to future employers the specific contributions of their coursework to their preparedness as an employee. Students would better understand the importance of course sequence, which should facilitate staying on track towards degree completion.



*For faculty*

We would provide data and a process for assessing individual courses and entire majors in terms of their contribution to the overall education and quality of their programs' graduates. This will allow faculty to make better decisions in designing and teaching individual courses and entire programs. It also allows the faculty to more easily recognize quality components that can be used to recruit new students. For interdisciplinary courses or service courses, faculty can better communicate with colleagues in other departments about expected student learning in prerequisites. For new faculty, we would be able to provide a foundation for their entry into teaching courses at UTK, since course and program SLOs will have been established.

*For the administration*

We would have a transparent way of reviewing and impacting the academic performance of students, faculty and entire programs. The information produced will allow us to identify areas of strength and weakness, assess the impact of actions taken and decisions made in these areas, and to measure our progress against university-wide goals (e.g. Top 25 Initiative). The process we will have in place, provides a natural way of implementing new goals.

## Implementation - Evaluation

A number of suggestions have been made for routes to implementation. They represent two separate initiatives and each of these then serve as a path to be evaluated:

*Incorporation of SLOs into Syllabi*

- **Submission to curriculum committee of the learning outcomes with revised/new courses.** Is there evidence that all curricular revisions submitted to the Undergraduate and Graduate Councils include learning outcomes for the courses submitted? As submissions are received, approval could be contingent upon inclusion of the learning outcomes. This could be tracked to determine success or failure at this level.
- **Inclusion in all syllabi for existing courses.** Evaluation would be tied to the question of whether a central repository of course syllabi with learning outcomes included in the syllabi has been established. A web accessible repository is ideal and would facilitate a review of syllabi for the inclusion of SLOs. An assessment could be made of how many course syllabi provide learning outcomes and which departments are early completers. The repository could be monitored for use and by whom. Data can be used for evaluation.
- **Linked to timetable entries for courses.** When students go into the timetable or into Banner (My UTK) to register, they should be able to link to course syllabi and read the learning outcome expectations. If built properly, we can track the number of hits, thus generating data used for evaluation.

*Assessment of Faculty Adoption, Implementation and Continued Practice*

- **Use peer evaluation of teaching / assess how well learning outcomes are made apparent in the course itself / link in the use of assessments in courses.** Guidelines for peer evaluation of teaching can be written to include the expectation that explicit learning outcome expectations are apparent in the materials provided to students. The evaluation from the peers should include a determination of the effectiveness of this effort.
- **P and T review process.** The instructions for preparation of the dossier to be considered for promotion and tenure should include an expectation that learning outcome expectations are an integral component of the teaching requirements. P and T dossiers can be assessed for quality of SLO presentation and discussion and results used to improve faculty training. This form of assessment would not be part of the promotion and tenure review decision.
- **Annual Retention, retaining non-tenure-track faculty and GTAs.** The above would hold for the annual retention evaluations of performance as well.
- **Departmental review:** an assessment report would become an integral part of the academic program and unit review process and other types of departmental reviews (i.e., assessment of low-producing programs as required by THEC).
- **SAIS / classroom evaluation—ask students about whether the learning outcomes were met.** This should be integrated into the student evaluations and this item should become one which peers who are reviewing teaching evaluate. This information would then be in the annual retention reports and the P and T portfolios.



## Preliminary Budget

| Activity                                          | Personnel                                                                                                                                            | Amount        | Operating                                                                                                                              | Amount  | Total by Fiscal Year |           |           |           |
|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|----------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
|                                                   |                                                                                                                                                      |               |                                                                                                                                        |         | 2011-2012            | 2012-2013 | 2013-2014 | 2014-2015 |
| Faculty development:                              |                                                                                                                                                      |               |                                                                                                                                        |         |                      |           |           |           |
| Workshops on writing and assessing SLOs           | Professional staff member for the TN TLC with expertise in SLO construction and assessment (salary \$60K plus 25% fringes)                           | \$75,000      | Meeting supplies and possibly food/snacks for workshops; monthly workshops for one year, length of workshop TBD                        | \$5,000 | \$80,000             | \$80,000  | \$75,000  | \$75,000  |
| Campus-wide lecture series on SLOs and assessment | Administrative support staff to help schedule speakers, make accommodations, prepare materials, etc. (Level 40, salary @ mid-point plus 30% fringes) | \$60,107      | Outside speakers used for lecture series (travel, housing, meals, honoraria); speakers could also conduct workshops; one each semester | \$5,000 | \$65,107             | \$65,107  | \$60,107  | \$60,107  |
| Train faculty assessment review committees        | Persons from lines 4 & 5 can also work on this                                                                                                       | No additional | Meeting supplies and possibly food/snacks for workshops; monthly workshops for one year, length of workshop TBD                        | \$5,000 | \$5,000              | \$5,000   |           |           |
| Faculty assessment review committees stipends     | Summer salaries and/or extra service pay for 3 to 5 faculty per college (used avg. 4 per college, 11 colleges, \$5,000 stipend plus 20% fringes)     | \$264,000     |                                                                                                                                        |         | \$264,000            | \$264,000 | \$264,000 | \$264,000 |

| Activity                                                                 | Personnel                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Amount    | Operating                             | Amount | Total by Fiscal Year |           |           |           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------------------|--------|----------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
|                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |           |                                       |        | 2011-2012            | 2012-2013 | 2013-2014 | 2014-2015 |
| Implementation incentives for a phase in period of 3 to 4 years          | Rewards for faculty and departments for meeting deadlines in preparing SLOs, incorporating SLOs in syllabi, developing assessment plans, and implementing assessment (63 depts / colleges; @ \$5,000 per unit spread over implementation period of 3 years) | \$315,000 |                                       |        | \$315,000            | \$315,000 | \$315,000 |           |
| Assessment coordination across the university                            | Assessment professional coordinator in appropriate campus unit (salary \$60K plus 25% fringes) Provide coordination and collection of unit reporting; support for college-level/ university-level committees; provides the feedback to the units.           | \$75,000  |                                       |        | \$75,000             | \$75,000  | \$75,000  | \$75,000  |
| Technology Needs                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |           |                                       |        |                      |           |           |           |
| Development of a searchable database of course syllabi link to timetable | IT personnel                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | TBD       | Enterprise software or build-your-own | TBD    |                      |           |           |           |
| SLO and assessment plan database with reporting capability               | IT personnel                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | TBD       | Enterprise software or build-your-own | TBD    |                      |           |           |           |
| Annual Totals                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |           |                                       |        | \$804,107            | \$804,107 | \$789,107 | \$474,107 |

<sup>i</sup> At the national level, increasing attention had been paid to accountability in higher education. The Commission on the Future of Higher Education, established in 2005 by the Department of Education, identified some key areas of needed higher education reform, including quality and accountability, and called for “mechanisms to ensure that colleges succeed in educating students” (US Department of Education, 2006). With the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) and the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU) also calling for learning outcomes assessment, developing the [Voluntary System of Accountability](#) which would allow for comparisons across institutions (Liu, 2011a), it seems only a matter of time before outcomes assessments are mandated.

<sup>ii</sup> See videoed testimony posted at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cC0JPs-rcF0&feature=youtu.be>.

<sup>iii</sup> From SACS’ *Principles of Accreditation*, 2012 edition (see page 27 and 29 of the document posted at <http://www.sacscoc.org/webChanges.asp>)

- 3.3.1 The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in each of the following areas: (Institutional Effectiveness)
  - 3.3.1.1 educational programs, to include student learning outcomes
  - 3.3.1.2 administrative support services
  - 3.3.1.3 academic and student support services
  - 3.3.1.4 research within its mission, if appropriate
  - 3.3.1.5 community/public service within its mission, if appropriate
- 3.5.1 The institution identifies college-level general education competencies and the extent to which students have attained them. (General education competencies)

<sup>iv</sup> **Student Forum on Learning: Curriculum Regulations and Expectations**

Issue:

The general education curriculum, academic advising, course selection process, and grading

Stance:

Based on our experiences with general education, academic advising, course selection, and the grading process, we feel that the below recommendations would allow students to take greater ownership of their learning.

Rationales/Solutions:

Syllabus Database

Rationale:

- A syllabus database would:
  - *give students insight into the required readings, grading scale, course expectations, and teaching method of each course*
  - help students plan their schedules to match their preferred learning styles or to create variation of instructional method
  - prevent students from taking courses with significant overlap, allowing them to broaden the range of classes they take

Solutions:

- We would like to see a database where instructors submit their most recent syllabi. This database could be streamlined to work with the existing TN101 system, allowing students to also see evaluative data alongside the syllabus, course objectives, etc.

Restructuring General Education

Rationale:

- The current general education curriculum, we feel, is very limiting. Students must sacrifice exploring courses of interest in order to fulfill gen. ed. requirements.

- By increasing options and general education flexibility, students will feel:
  - more ownership for their academic career
  - as though the gen. ed. curriculum is valuable, rather than a waste of time and class space.

## Solutions:

- Create a simple way for students to petition to replace courses of interest with a general education requirement
  - This process should be guided by academic advising and
  - should occur before the student takes the course
- Increase the available course options for required gen. ed. fields

## Improvements in Academic Advising

## Rationale:

- Advising often feels impersonal and indifferent to the individuality of each student's experience.
- Students are often not fully informed on the requirements needed to stay on track to graduate, study abroad, and/or seek an internship
- This issue is compounded when a student changes colleges

## Solutions:

- Uniformity of advising format across colleges
- Online sign-up for appointments
  - Lengthened and individual appointment time
- Quality assessment after the session

## v Selected references regarding SLOs and assessment

1. Walvoord, Barbara E. 2010. *Assessment clear and simple: A practical guide for institutions, departments, and general education*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 126 pp. ISBN=978-0-470-54119-7 (pbk), <http://www.josseybass.com/WileyCDA/>

This would be the place to start if you want more information. It is written in very clear and understandable terms. Walvoord discusses why assessment is important in terms of the students and the faculty. She takes assessment beyond accreditation.

2. Allen, Mary J. 2004. *Assessing academic programs in higher education*. Anker Publishing (now part of Jossey-Bass), San Francisco, 193 pp. ISBN=978-1-882982-67-7 (hbk), <http://www.josseybass.com/WileyCDA/>

This is another good reference for how to develop your plan. More detailed than Walvoord. Dr. Allen is a frequent presenter about assessment at regional accrediting commissions' annual meetings.

3. Banta, Trudy W., ed. 2002. *Building a scholarship of assessment*. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 339 pp. ISBN=0-470-62307-1 (pbk), <http://www.josseybass.com/WileyCDA/>

This book covers the history of assessment and covers the process much more in depth than Walvoord. It would be good for a person who has experience with assessment and wants to begin to use the assessment process as a basis for research into student learning.

4. Banta, Trudy W., Elizabeth A. Jones, and Karen E. Black. 2009. *Designing effective assessment: Principles and profiles of good practice*. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 338 pp. ISBN=978-0-470-39334-5 (pbk), <http://www.josseybass.com/WileyCDA/>

Detailed discussion of assessment along with examples of rubrics, assessment plans, and implementation schemes from other institutions.

5. Suskie, Linda. 2009. *Assessing student learning: A common sense guide*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 342 pp. ISBN=978-0-470-28964-8 (pbk), <http://www.josseybass.com/WileyCDA/>

If you're ready to move beyond the basics as discussed in Walvoord, this would be the next place to look. Parts three and four provide more detailed discussion and "how to's" of assessment tools and discussion of how to use assessment results to improve instruction and the learning environment.



# **CURRICULUM PROCEDURES TASKFORCE REPORT**

**APRIL 2013**

**SALLY McMILLAN, CHAIR**

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## INTRODUCTION

In February 2012, the Curriculum Procedures Taskforce (CPT) was convened to examine the curricular review process and to make recommendations for improvement. Several factors precipitated the review:

- The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accreditation standards now require all institutions to define a credit hour and to establish procedures for monitoring the assignment of such hours to coursework.
- SACS standards also require institutions to define student learning outcomes (SLOs), regularly assess attainment of said outcomes, and use the assessment results to drive curricular changes.
- The current curricular calendar does not provide a College the opportunity to respond to other Colleges' changes (most proposals are submitted at the same time, just before the extended winter break). This is particularly problematic when dealing with high demand and general education courses.
- Current procedures do not ensure that course fees are reassigned when course disciplines and/or numbers change.
- At present, changes in delivery method are not included in the curricular review process. It's increasingly difficult to accurately track distance education offerings for promotion and reporting purposes.
- The curricular change process is inconsistent between undergraduate and graduate curricula.
- Curricular submission errors are increasing over time.

## TASKFORCE CHARGE

Map out a process for managing curriculum development and revision that will conform with SACS requirements for implementation of the credit hour policy. The process should also integrate student learner outcomes and show how they have been developed, assessed, and utilized for curriculum revision. Ideally, the process will also identify high-impact courses and have mechanisms for ensuring that all affected parties are given timely notice of changes to high-impact courses. Whenever possible, the process should be the same for undergraduate and graduate curricula. If possible, some type of technology solution may be recommended as a tool for reducing the errors in curricular submission.

## TASKFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

### Credit Hour Definition

*SACS accreditation standards now require all institutions to define a credit hour and to establish procedures for monitoring the assignment of such hours to coursework (see [Appendix 1](#)).*

The Faculty Senate approved the following CPT proposal in March 2013. The guidelines now appear in the university catalogs and in the Curricular Submission Guidelines Manual.

“The unit of credit is the semester credit hour. One semester credit hour represents an amount of instruction that reasonably approximates both 50 minutes per week of classroom-based direct instruction and a minimum of two hours per week of student work outside the classroom over a fall or spring semester. Normally, each semester credit hour represents an amount of instruction that is equivalent to 700 minutes of classroom-based direct instruction. The amount of time that is required to earn one semester credit hour in a laboratory, fieldwork, studio, or seminar-based course varies with the nature of the subject and the aims of the course; typically, a minimum of two or three hours of work in a laboratory, field, studio, or seminar-based setting is considered the equivalent of 50 minutes of classroom-based direct instruction. Semester credit hours earned in courses such as internships, research, theses, dissertation, etc. are based on outcome expectations established by the academic program.”

### Student Learning Outcomes

*SACS standards require institutions to define student learning outcomes (SLOs), regularly assess attainment of said outcomes, and use the assessment results to drive curricular changes.*

To ensure SACS compliance, the Curriculum Procedures Taskforce recommends that all future program proposals include program-level student learning outcomes and assessment methods. Further, all substantive program revisions should include assessment results or other data corroborating the need for revision. The documentation need not be extensive. A description of how the proposed program change will improve the curriculum and what evidence informed that decision is adequate. The rationale will help corroborate for SACS that assessment and/or other forms of feedback are driving program improvements (“closing the loop”). Additional information on program-level SLOs and assessment is available at: <http://tenntlc.utk.edu/programmatic-and-course-based-assessment/> and <http://sacs.utk.edu/>.

To ensure that Curriculum Committee members’ time and resources are focused on more substantive curricular issues, the CPT also recommends the use of a consent agenda for minor, low-impact curricular changes. Uncontested revisions and routine housekeeping edits will be voted on as a package (see [Appendix 2](#)). More substantive issues that may impact multiple units will be highlighted in the agenda for easier review. The committee evaluates proposals on several criteria, including but not limited to:



**TASKFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS (CONT.)**

- Adherence to the standards of the university and/or the individual program's accrediting body
- Adherence to the guidelines of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission
- Inclusion of measurable student learning outcomes and assessment methods
- Impact on general education requirements
- Impact on the curricula of other departments
- Accuracy of course offerings in the catalog
- Adequate university, college, and departmental resources to accommodate the change
- Sufficient supporting documentation

*(adapted from Graduate Council Curriculum Committee Bylaws)*

**High Impact Changes**

*The current curricular calendar does not provide a College the opportunity to respond to other Colleges' changes (most proposals are submitted at the same time, just before the extended winter break). This is particularly problematic when dealing with high demand and general education courses.*

The Curriculum Procedures Taskforce recommends that course impact reports be run in advance of the proposal submission deadline. Preferably in October\*, the academic associate deans will send their list of proposed course changes to the curriculum coordinators who will run the course impact report and distribute the results. The November Associate Deans Group meeting will provide an opportunity for further discussion of the impact report should it be warranted.

A follow-up Curriculum Committee meeting will also be scheduled each year after the main January session in case (1) an issue arises that requires consultation with the program faculty, (2) impacted units need more time to respond to a significant change, and/or (3) the committee conditionally approves a proposal contingent upon recommended changes.

**Changes to Courses with Fees**

*Current procedures do not ensure that course fees are reassigned when course disciplines and/or numbers change.*

The Argos course fees report (TWRFEEC) will be cross-referenced against all incoming curricular proposals. The courses with fees will be labeled in the Curriculum Committee and the Council agendas (similar to cross-listed and general education courses) to ensure that fees are not inadvertently affected by curricular revisions (see [Appendix 3](#)).

\* *Ideally, units considering changes to high enrollment service courses would request a course impact report during the early planning phase, so affected units could be included in the discussions.*

**TASKFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS (CONT.)****Delivery Method Changes**

*At present, changes in delivery method are not included in the curricular review process. It's increasingly difficult to accurately track distance education offerings for promotion and reporting purposes.*

Distance education courses have different requirements and expectations than traditional courses; students need to know up front if a course is delivered solely online, in hybrid format, etc. The Online Course Work Group is currently reviewing a coding structure that would more precisely reflect teaching modalities and course expectations.

The Curriculum Procedures Taskforce recommends that instructors discuss variations in delivery method with their department head prior to instituting any changes. Across-the-board delivery method modifications to all sections of a course (particularly high enrollment service courses) should be reviewed by the Curriculum Committee to ensure that the affected Colleges have adequate time to adjust their curricula if needed.

**Proposal Consistency**

*The curricular change process is not consistent between undergraduate and graduate curricula. Further, curricular submission errors are increasing over time.*

Curriculog™ is a curriculum management solution developed by Digital Architecture, the company behind the catalog management software, aalog™. Curriculog™ integrates with student information systems, streamlines curriculum approval processes, and makes approved courses and programs available for catalog publishing (*Curriculog™ brochure, [www.digarc.com](http://www.digarc.com)*).

The system has the potential to dramatically reduce submission errors, provide consistent processing of undergraduate and graduate changes, track proposals through every step of the process, and eliminate triple entry of curricular changes (Curriculum Committee agenda, Banner student information system, and aalog™ catalog management software).

The university plans to implement the new system in the 2013-14 academic year.

**PROPOSED CURRICULOG™ TIMELINE**

| Time Frame                 | Activity                                                               | Personnel                                    |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| January 2013-June 2013     | Aalog conversion to core structure and semester-by-semester sequencing | Digital Architecture                         |
| July 2013                  | Contracts                                                              | Digital Architecture                         |
|                            |                                                                        | Office of the Univ. Registrar                |
| July 2013                  | Kick-Off Meeting                                                       | Digital Architecture                         |
|                            |                                                                        | Office of the Univ. Registrar                |
|                            |                                                                        | Graduate School                              |
| August 2013-October 2013   | Curriculog infrastructure and consultation                             | Digital Architecture                         |
|                            |                                                                        | Office of the Univ. Registrar                |
|                            |                                                                        | LDA position (Office of the Univ. Registrar) |
| October 2013-November 2013 | Curriculog/Banner integration                                          | Digital Architecture                         |
|                            |                                                                        | Office of Information Technology             |
|                            |                                                                        | Office of the Univ. Registrar                |
| January 2014 - March 2014  | Curriculog internal training                                           | Digital Architecture                         |
|                            |                                                                        | Office of the Univ. Registrar                |
|                            |                                                                        | Graduate School                              |
|                            |                                                                        | LDA position (Office of the Univ. Registrar) |
| April 2014 - June 2014     | Curriculog campus-wide training                                        | LDA position (Office of the Univ. Registrar) |
| August 2014                | Curriculog launch                                                      | Office of the Univ. Registrar                |
|                            |                                                                        | Graduate School                              |
| August 2014 - July 2015    | Troubleshooting and campus support                                     | LDA position (Office of the Univ. Registrar) |

## PROPOSED CURRICULOG™ BUDGET

| Activity                                                     | Personnel                                                     | 2013-14<br>Fiscal<br>Year | 2014-15<br>Fiscal<br>Year | 2015-16<br>Fiscal<br>Year | 2016-17<br>Fiscal<br>Year |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Curriculog software and license                              | Digital Architecture                                          | \$72,559                  | *****                     | *****                     | *****                     |
| Annual web hosting & support                                 | Digital Architecture                                          | *****                     | \$11,126                  | \$11,126                  | \$11,126                  |
| Aalog conversion to core structure and semester sequencing   | Digital Architecture                                          | *****                     | *****                     | *****                     | *****                     |
| Curriculog infrastructure, consultation, training            | Digital Architecture                                          | *****                     | \$15,000                  | *****                     | *****                     |
| Curriculog/Banner integration                                | Digital Architecture                                          | *****                     | *****                     | *****                     | *****                     |
|                                                              | Office of Information Technology                              | TBD                       | *****                     | *****                     | *****                     |
| Curriculog campus-wide training, troubleshooting and support | LDA position (pay grade 39),<br>Office of the Univ. Registrar | \$15,000                  | \$30,000                  | *****                     | *****                     |
| TOTAL                                                        |                                                               | \$87,559                  | \$56,126                  | \$11,126                  | \$11,126                  |

## APPENDIX 1

**SACS Credit Hour Requirements**

***Southern Association of Colleges and Schools  
Commission on Colleges  
1866 Southern Lane  
Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097***

**CREDIT HOURS****– Policy –**

As part of its review of an institution seeking initial or continuing accreditation, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) conducts reviews of an institution's assignment of credit hours. Academic credit has provided the basis for measuring the amount of engaged learning time expected of a typical student enrolled not only in traditional classroom settings but also laboratories, studios, internships and other experiential learning, and distance and correspondence education. Students, institutions, employers, and others rely on the common currency of academic credit to support a wide range of activities, including the transfer of students from one institution to another. For several decades, the federal government has relied on credits as a measure of student academic engagement as a basis of awarding financial aid.

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to institutions and evaluation committees on the Commission's expectations regarding credits and to set forth the federal regulations regarding the award of credit.

**Federal Definition of the Credit Hour.** For purposes of the application of this policy and in accord with federal regulations, a credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates

1. Not less than one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time, or
2. At least an equivalent amount of work as required outlined in item 1 above for other academic

activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

**Guidelines for Flexibility in Interpretation.** An institution is responsible for determining the credit hours awarded for coursework in its programs in accordance with the definition of a credit hour for Federal program purposes. The definition does provide some flexibility for institutions in determining the appropriate amount of credit hours for student coursework.

- The institution determines the amount of credit for student work.
- A credit hour is expected to be a reasonable approximation of a minimum amount of student work in a Carnegie unit in accordance with commonly accepted practice in higher education.
- The credit hour definition is a minimum standard that does not restrict an institution from setting a higher standard that requires more student work per credit hour.
- The definition does not dictate particular amounts of classroom time versus out-of-class student work.
- In determining the amount of work the institution's learning outcomes will entail, the institution may take into consideration alternative delivery methods, measurements of student work, academic calendars, disciplines, and degree levels.
- To the extent an institution believes that complying with the Federal definition of a credit hour would not be appropriate for academic and other institutional needs, it may adopt a separate measure for those purposes.
- Credits may be awarded on the basis of documentation of the amount of work a typical student is expected to complete within a specified amount of academically engaged time, or on the basis of documented student learning calibrated to that amount of academically engaged time for a typical student.

The intent of the above flexibility as provided by Federal guidance is to recognize the differences across institutions, fields of study, types of coursework, and delivery methods, while providing a consistent measure of student work for purposes of Federal programs.

**Commission Obligations in the Review of the Credit Hour.** The Commission reviews the institution's (1) policies and procedures for determining credit hours, including clock to credit hour conversions, that the institution awards for coursework, and (2) the application of its policies and procedures to its programs and coursework. Following the evaluation, the Commission's Board of Trustees is obligated to make a reasonable determination regarding the institution's assignment of credit hours and whether it conforms to commonly accepted practice in higher education. In doing so, the Commission may use sampling or other methods in its evaluation. As with the identification of non-compliance with other standards, the Board is obligated to take action in accord with that used in relation to other standards of non-compliance. If the Commission's Board finds systemic non-compliance with this policy or significant non-compliance regarding one or more programs at the institution, the Commission is required to notify the U.S. Secretary of Education.

## Procedures

1. **Institutions preparing Compliance Certifications in anticipation of reaffirmation of accreditation (accredited institutions) or initial membership (candidate institutions).** The institution will be required to document compliance with Federal Requirement 4.9 (Definition of Credit Hours) and Comprehensive Standard 3.13.1 (Policy Compliance) as relates to credit hours. If the Board imposes a public sanction or takes adverse action in part or in full for continuing non-compliance with FR 4.9 and CS 3.13.1 as applies to the credit hour, the Commission will notify the U.S. Secretary of Education. The institution will be informed of such action.

2. **Institutions undergoing substantive change review related to an academic program review in anticipation of continuing accreditation.**

The institution will be required to address Federal Requirement 4.9 (Definition of Credit Hours) as part of its prospectus (program expansion) or application (degree level change). Following review of the prospectus, Commission staff will refer the substantive change case to the Commission's Board of Trustees if there is evidence of non-compliance with FR 4.9. For substantive change cases involving level change, the application will automatically be forwarded to the Commission's Board of Trustees.

As a result of Board review that may include a site visit, if the Board imposes a public sanction or takes adverse action in part or in full for continuing non-compliance with FR 4.9 and CS 3.13.1 as applies to the credit hour, the Commission will notify the U.S. Secretary of Education. The institution will be informed of such action.

3. The Commission is not responsible for reviewing every course and related documentation of learning outcomes; rather, the Commission will review the policies and procedures that the institution uses to assign credit hours, with the application verified by a sampling of the institution's degrees and nondegree programs to include a variety of academic activities, disciplines, and delivery modes. The review process for sampling encompasses a varied sample of the institution's degree and nondegree programs in terms of academic discipline, level, delivery modes, and types of academic activities. In reviewing academic activities other than classroom or direct faculty instruction accompanied by out-of-class work, the Commission will determine whether an institution's processes and procedures result in the establishment of reasonable equivalencies for the amount of academic work described in paragraph one of the credit hour definition within the framework of acceptable institutional practices at comparable institutions of higher education for similar programs.
4. The Commission will notify the U.S. Secretary of Education of its findings of systemic non-compliance with this policy or FR 4.9 or of significant non-compliance regarding one or more programs at the institution only after the Commission follows its review process that includes notification to the institution of non-compliance and a reasonable time period for the institution

- to respond to the citations and provide documentation of compliance.
5. Comprehensive Standard 3.4.6 reads as follows: “The institution employs sound and acceptable practices for determining the amount and level of credit awarded for courses, regardless of format or mode of delivery.” It is to be reviewed in conjunction with FR 4.9.

***Document History***

*Approved: Board of Trustees, June 2011*



## APPENDIX 2

| Categorizing Curricular Changes                                 |                            |                    |              |                    |                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Curricular Change                                               | Revision Type              | Enforced in Banner | Minor Change | Substantive Change | High Impact Change |
| Academic Unit<br>(college, school, dept)                        | ADD                        |                    |              | Y                  |                    |
|                                                                 | DROP                       |                    |              | Y                  |                    |
|                                                                 | REVISE                     |                    |              | Y                  |                    |
| Majors, Minors, Grad Certificates                               | ADD                        | Y                  |              | Y                  |                    |
|                                                                 | DROP                       | Y                  |              | Y                  |                    |
|                                                                 | REVISE<br>(minimal)        |                    | Y            |                    |                    |
|                                                                 | REVISE<br>(substantive)    |                    |              | Y                  |                    |
| Academic Discipline/Subject                                     | ADD                        |                    | Y            |                    |                    |
|                                                                 | DROP                       |                    | Y            |                    |                    |
|                                                                 | REVISE                     |                    | Y            |                    |                    |
| Course                                                          | ADD                        | Y                  | Y            |                    |                    |
|                                                                 | DROP                       | Y                  | Y            |                    | Y*                 |
|                                                                 | REVISE                     | Y                  | Y            |                    |                    |
| Title                                                           | REVISE<br>(standard)       |                    | Y            |                    |                    |
|                                                                 | REVISE<br>(variable title) |                    | Y            |                    |                    |
| Credit Hours                                                    | ADD<br>(increase hours)    | Y                  | Y            |                    | Y*                 |
|                                                                 | DROP<br>(decrease hours)   | Y                  | Y            |                    | Y*                 |
| Description                                                     | REVISE<br>(minimal)        |                    | Y            |                    |                    |
|                                                                 | REVISE<br>(substantive)    |                    |              | Y                  |                    |
| Cross-listing                                                   | ADD                        | Y                  | Y            |                    |                    |
|                                                                 | DROP                       | Y                  | Y            |                    |                    |
|                                                                 | REVISE                     | Y                  | Y            |                    |                    |
| General Education Designation                                   | ADD                        | Y (DARS)           |              | Y                  | Y*                 |
|                                                                 | DROP                       | Y (DARS)           |              | Y                  | Y*                 |
|                                                                 | REVISE                     | Y (DARS)           |              | Y                  | Y*                 |
| Contact Hour Distribution<br>(not affecting total credit hours) | ADD                        |                    | Y            |                    |                    |
|                                                                 | DROP                       |                    | Y            |                    |                    |
|                                                                 | REVISE                     |                    | Y            |                    |                    |

| Curricular Change        | Revision Type | Enforced in Banner | Minor Change | Substantive Change | High Impact Change |
|--------------------------|---------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Grading Restriction      | ADD           | Y                  | Y            |                    |                    |
|                          | DROP          | Y                  | Y            |                    |                    |
|                          | REVISE        | Y                  | Y            |                    |                    |
| Repeatability            | ADD           | Y                  | Y            |                    |                    |
|                          | DROP          | Y                  | Y            |                    |                    |
|                          | REVISE        | Y                  | Y            |                    |                    |
| Credit Restriction       | ADD           | Y (DARS)           | Y            |                    |                    |
|                          | DROP          | Y (DARS)           | Y            |                    |                    |
|                          | REVISE        | Y (DARS)           | Y            |                    |                    |
| (DE) Prerequisites       | ADD           |                    | Y            |                    |                    |
|                          | DROP          |                    | Y            |                    |                    |
|                          | REVISE        |                    | Y            |                    |                    |
| (DE) Corequisites        | ADD           |                    | Y            |                    |                    |
|                          | DROP          |                    | Y            |                    |                    |
|                          | REVISE        |                    | Y            |                    |                    |
| (RE) Prerequisites       | ADD           | Y                  | Y            |                    | Y*                 |
|                          | DROP          | Y                  | Y            |                    |                    |
|                          | REVISE        | Y                  | Y            |                    |                    |
| (RE) Corequisites        | ADD           | Y                  | Y            |                    | Y*                 |
|                          | DROP          | Y                  | Y            |                    |                    |
|                          | REVISE        | Y                  | Y            |                    |                    |
| Recommended Background   | ADD           |                    | Y            |                    |                    |
|                          | DROP          |                    | Y            |                    |                    |
|                          | REVISE        |                    | Y            |                    |                    |
| Comments                 | ADD           |                    | Y            |                    |                    |
|                          | DROP          |                    | Y            |                    |                    |
|                          | REVISE        |                    | Y            |                    |                    |
| Credit Level Restriction | ADD           | Y                  | Y            |                    | Y*                 |
|                          | DROP          | Y                  | Y            |                    |                    |
|                          | REVISE        | Y                  | Y            |                    |                    |
| Registration Restriction | ADD           | Y                  | Y            |                    | Y*                 |
|                          | DROP          | Y                  | Y            |                    |                    |
|                          | REVISE        | Y                  | Y            |                    |                    |
| Registration Permission  | ADD           | Y                  | Y            |                    | Y*                 |
|                          | DROP          | Y                  | Y            |                    |                    |
|                          | REVISE        | Y                  | Y            |                    |                    |

\* Impact depends on the course. Dropping a high enrollment or a general education course is much more significant than altering one required by only a few majors. The same is true when limiting enrollment in a course that was previously open to all students. Not sure of impact? Contact the Office of the University Registrar or the Graduate School for a course impact report.

## APPENDIX 3

Course Fees Designation**Curricular Proposals**

- College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources
- College of Architecture and Design
- College of Arts and Sciences
- College of Business Administration
- College of Communication and Information
- College of Education, Health and Human Sciences
- College of Engineering
- College of Nursing
- College of Social Work
- First-Year Studies Program
- University Honors Program

\* General education course

† Cross-listed course

**\$ Course with fees**

◆ Add or drop of major, concentration, minor